

## 15. Fences

(See zoning ordinance [§ 78-517](#), Fencing, wall and hedge standards)

The Town of Herndon Zoning Ordinance User Guide series provides the public with general information on land use regulations affecting activities undertaken by the public and administered by the Herndon Department of Community Development. It is not intended to be a complete statement of all applicable regulations. Individuals are encouraged to contact the Department of Community Development at [community.development@herndon-va.gov](mailto:community.development@herndon-va.gov) or 703-787-7380 for complete permitting requirements.

### Are fences on private property regulated by the town code?

Yes. Features such as fences, walls and retaining walls are permitted in all zoning districts. There are provisions that apply whenever a person is constructing, reconstructing, or replacing a fence. For property that lies within the Heritage Preservation Overlay District (HPOD), a Certificate of Appropriateness also may be needed for a fence (see zoning ordinance [§ 78-202.8](#)). Outside of the HPOD, approval from the Architectural Review Board may be needed for certain fences (see [Chapter 58](#) of the Herndon Town Code.)

This user guide focuses on fences on property with single-family detached homes or townhouses.

### What is the basic restriction on fence height?

Generally, fences may be no higher than four feet in a front yard, and no higher than seven feet elsewhere. Limitations and qualifications to this general statement do apply and are explained in [§ 78-517\(c\)](#).

### Where may a fence be placed on a lot?

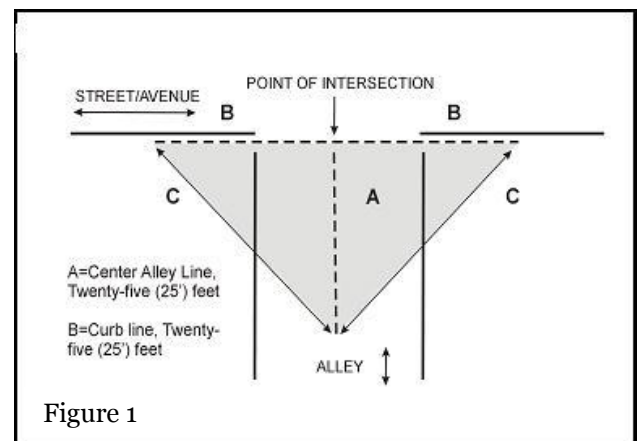
Location of the fence may be restricted based on the shape of the lot, whether or not it is a typical interior lot, and even the location of the adjacent home. This is explained more fully in [§ 78-517\(d\)](#). See also the attached illustrations.

Of primary concern for public safety is visibility at intersections for streets and driveways. Fences, walls, or other visual barriers over three feet in height above grade must be placed in such a manner as to enable and ensure the ongoing view of pedestrians on the sidewalk and traffic vision at intersections.

Accordingly, no visual obstruction over three feet in height above grade is permitted within the 25 feet sight distance triangle created at the intersection of an alley and street.

The triangle is measured from a point where the curb line and the center line of the alley meet. The distance from this point shall be 25 feet along the street curb line ("B") and 25 feet along the alley center line ("A"). The third side of the triangle ("C") connects these two sides, creating the sight distance triangle (Figure 1).

Furthermore, no visual obstruction over three feet in height above grade shall be permitted within the six feet sight distance triangle created at the intersection of a garage entrance and alley.



### What are the requirements for a perimeter fence and wall in a residential development?

A perimeter fence and wall means any fence or wall that is located within the common area of a single-family detached, single-family attached, or multi-family development and is within 20 feet of the edge of the right-of-way of a public street. Requirements for perimeter fences and walls are outlined in [§ 78-517\(d\)](#).

## What type of fences are prohibited in the town?

- ☐ Barbed wire fences;
- ☐ Above-ground electrified fences;
- ☐ Chain link fences in all zoning districts except when they surround tennis courts, ball fields, playgrounds, other recreational facilities and non-home based schools; and
- ☐ Fences or walls made of debris, junk, rolled plastic, sheet metal, plywood, or waste materials (unless materials are recycled and reprocessed into building materials marketed to the general public and resemble customary fencing materials described in [§ 78-517](#) (b) ).

## What is involved in gaining permission from the town to place a fence in a yard for a single-family detached home or a townhouse?

**Step One.** Prior to visiting town offices, check with the homeowner's association to make sure the proposed fence complies with the association standards. Those standards may be more restrictive than the standards in the town zoning ordinance.

**Step Two.** Find out if the property is in the Heritage Preservation Overlay District. Call the Department of Community Development, or check the zoning map on the town website: [www.herndon-va.gov/](http://www.herndon-va.gov/), on left-side column click on "Planning/Zoning" then click on "Maps" in the right-side column. Scroll down to the "Zoning Map". See the shaded area near the center of the map, and the smaller shaded area in the upper right quarter of the map.

**Step Three.** If the site is outside the Heritage Preservation Overlay District on land zoned R-15 or R-10, or on land zoned Planned Development Residential District, and the subject property is used for a single-family detached dwelling, the fence may be installed without town review as long as:

- It is not a retaining wall;
- It meets all the standards described in [§ 78-517, Fencing Standards](#);
- No digging or excavation of soil in excess of 2,500 square feet occurs;
- It is not located in a restrictive easement that prohibits the placement of fences; and
- Installation of the fence does not conflict with any underground utilities or drainage structures (call Miss Utility at 1-800-552-7001 to confirm).

**Step Four.** If the site is inside the Heritage Preservation Overlay District, regardless of the zoning or use, a Certificate of Appropriateness must be issued by the Town. This may or may not require a public hearing with the Heritage Preservation Review Board. It is best to discuss the proposal with the Town staff before submitting an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

**Step Five.** If the site is outside the Heritage Preservation Overlay District, for any property that is not zoned for single-family detached dwellings and does not contain a single-family detached dwelling, application must be made to the Architectural Review Board for any fence to be constructed, reconstructed, altered or restored. This includes the repainting of a fence if the repainting results in a change of color of the fence. The application would be considered by the Architectural Review Board at a public hearing. The review and approval process may take one or two months.

## Level of approval needed for residential fences

Retaining Wall:

- ✓ Building permit, land disturbing permit, or both
- ✓ May require Single Lot Development Plan

Fences on lots *inside* Heritage Preservation Overlay District (includes construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repainting to a different color):

- ✓ Certificate of Appropriateness

Fences in a single-family detached residential district on a lot used for a single-family detached dwelling *outside* of the Heritage Preservation Overlay District:

- ✓ No zoning approval needed (must meet standards)

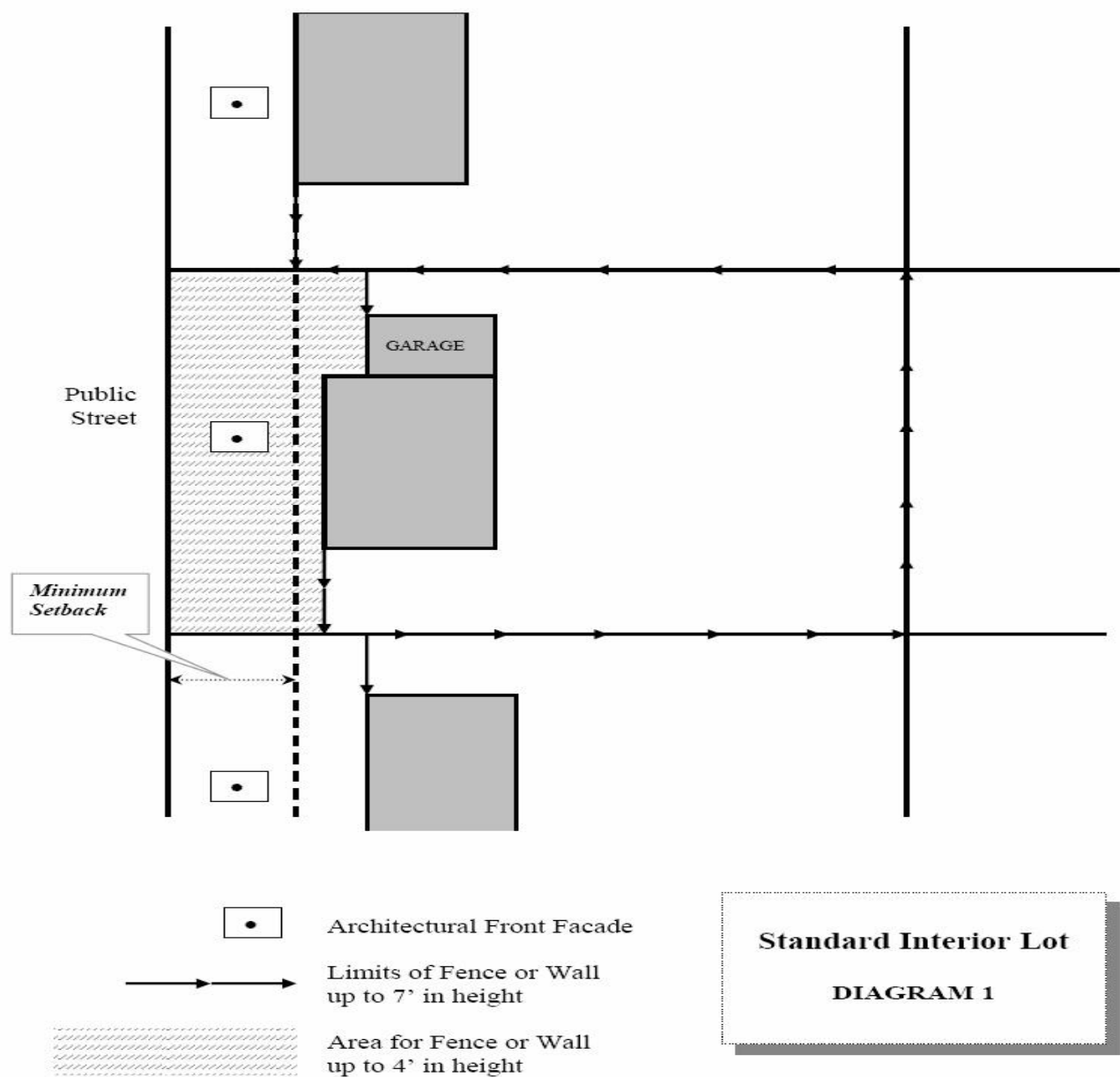
Fences on townhouse lots outside the Heritage Preservation Overlay District:

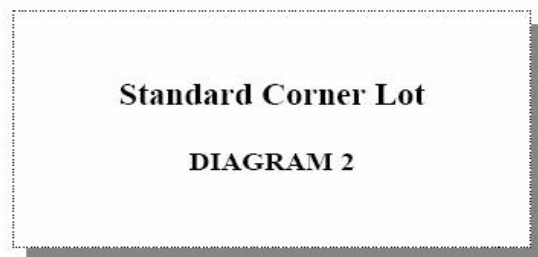
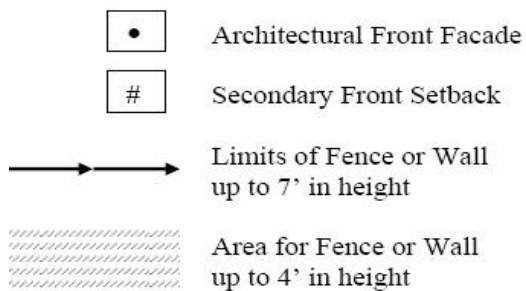
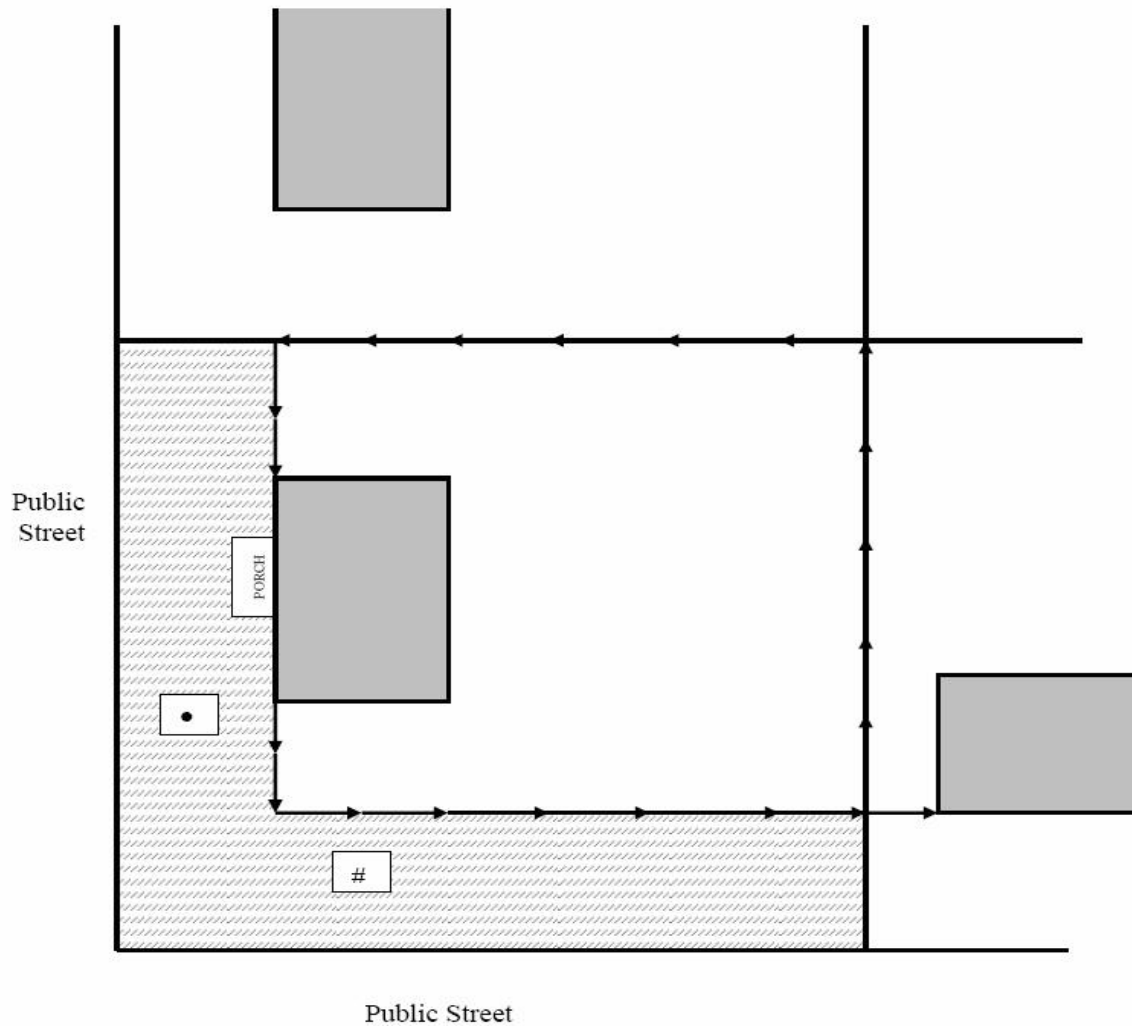
- ✓ No zoning approval needed (must meet standards)

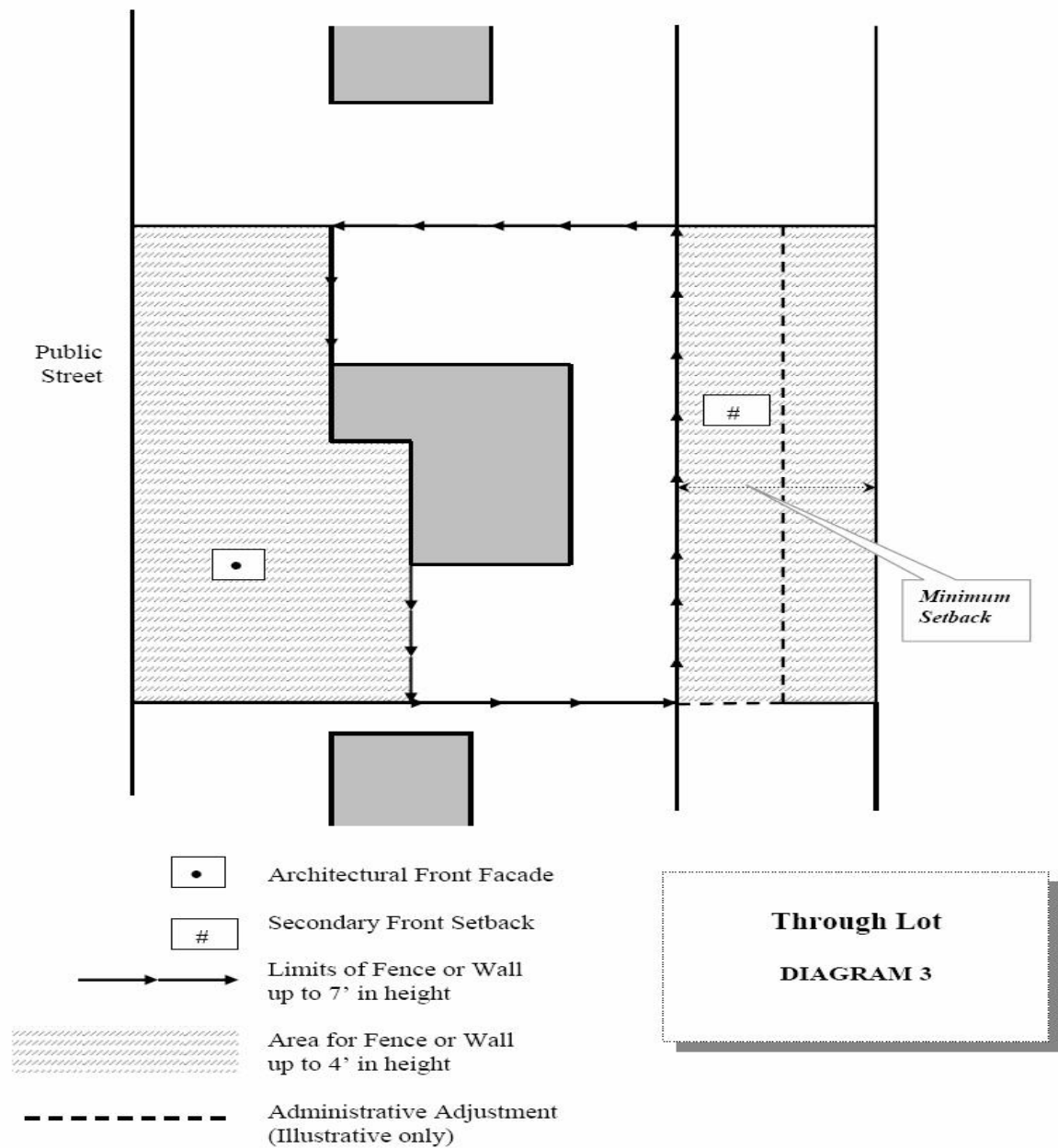
Reconstruction or maintenance of existing fences:

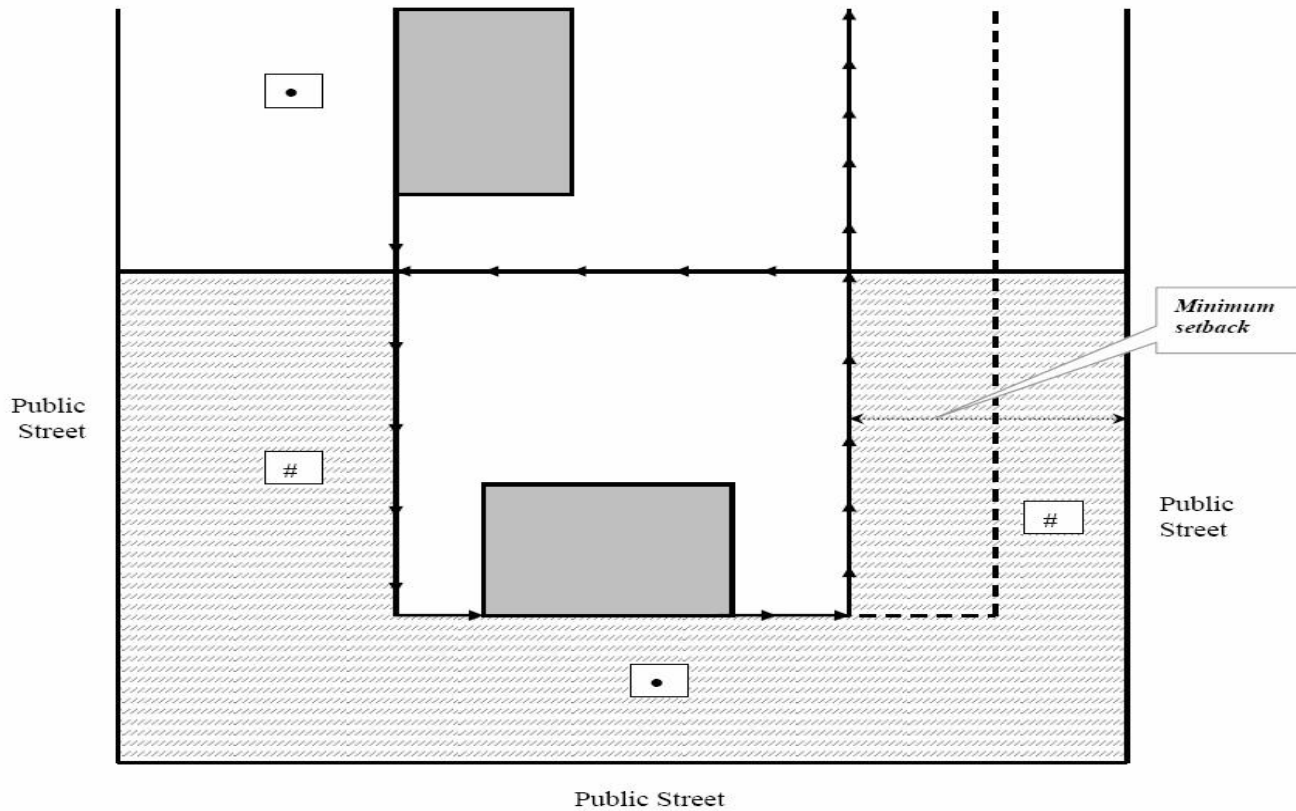
- ✓ May be reconstructed or maintained to its current condition and design without zoning approval.

Diagrams illustrating permissible fence and wall locations on residential lots





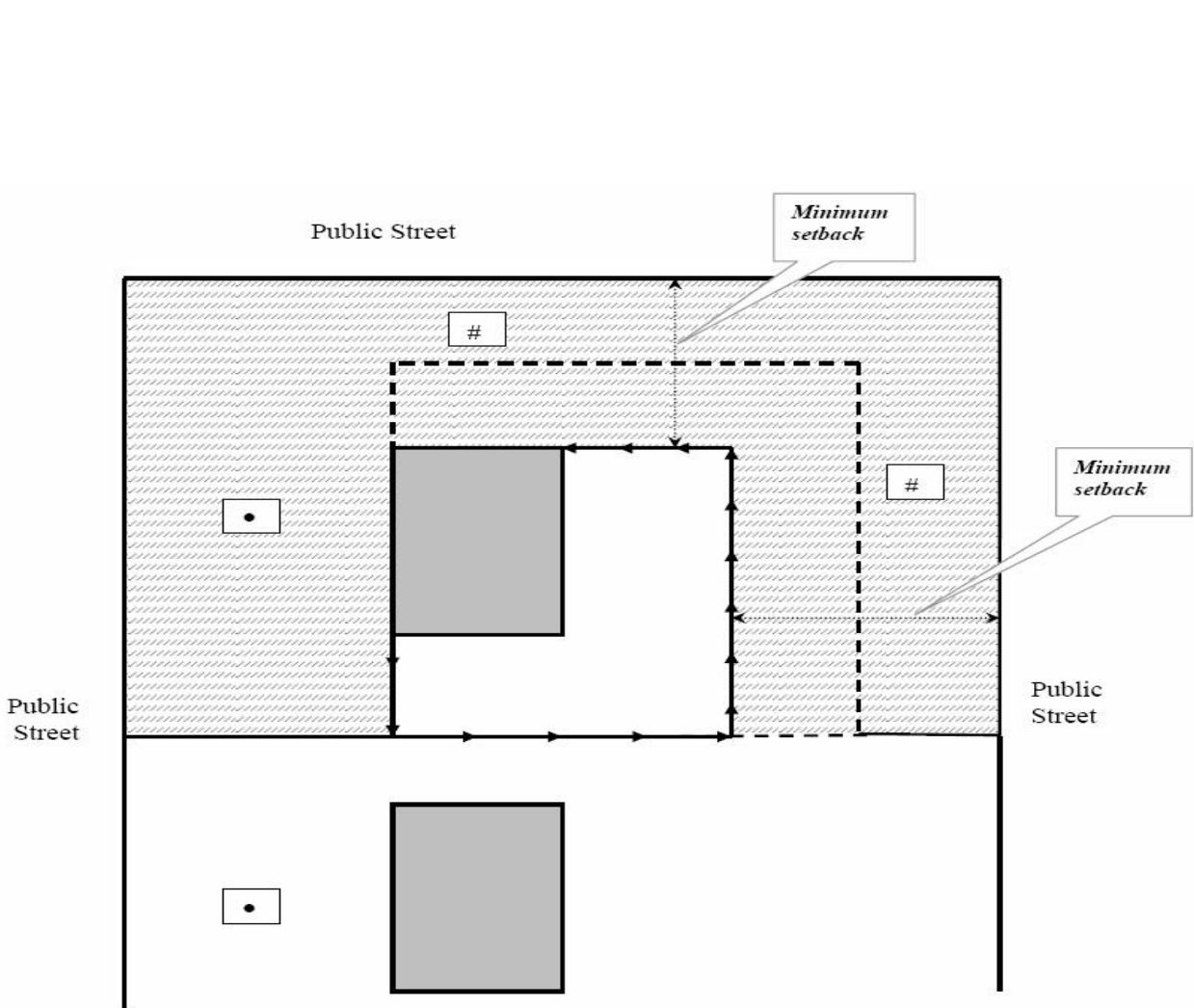









- Architectural Front Facade
- # Secondary Front Setback
- Limits of Fence or Wall up to 7' in height
- Area for Fence or Wall up to 4' in height
- - - Administrative Adjustment (Illustrative only)

**Three Sided Corner Lot  
With Rear of Dwelling  
Abutting Adjacent Property**

**DIAGRAM 4**



-  Architectural Front Facade
-  Secondary Front Setback
-  Limits of Fence or Wall up to 7' in height
-  Area for Fence or Wall up to 4' in height
-  Administrative Adjustment (Illustrative only)

### Three Sided Corner Lot With Side of Dwelling Abutting Adjacent Property

**DIAGRAM 5**

## Need more information?

Have a question regarding required permits, the permit process, or application requirements? Call 703-787-7380 or e-mail [community.development@herndon-va.gov](mailto:community.development@herndon-va.gov) to make an appointment to see a member of the Department of Community Development.

Have a question regarding Building Permits or construction codes? Call 703-435-6850 or e-mail [buildinginspections@herndon-va.gov](mailto:buildinginspections@herndon-va.gov) to make an appointment to see the Building Official.

Visit the Planning and Zoning page on the Town's web site, [www.herndon-va.gov](http://www.herndon-va.gov) to view the Department of Community Development web site for the Zoning Ordinance User Guide series or to access the town code. Town offices are located at the Herndon Municipal Center at 777 Lynn Street, Herndon, Virginia, 20170.

## User's Guide to the Zoning Ordinance Series

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